

Message Text

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72

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-15 NEA-10 EB-11 COME-00 STR-08 AGR-20

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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4772

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: ADS DECLAS 9/27/74

TAGS: ETRD, EAID, MT, IT

SUBJ: ITALIAN - MALTESE ECONOMIC TALKS

REF: VALLETTA 1903 B. VALLETTA 1800 (NOTAL)

1. PROF. PAOLO LABINI FROM ITALIAN MINISTRY FINANCE ARRIVED IN MALTA SEPTEMBER 24 FOR SEVERAL DAYS TALKS WITH PM MINTOFF AND MINISTER FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY-AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM PAUL XUEREB. ACCORDING TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY TIMES OF MALTA (INDEPENDENT CONSERVATIVE), MINTOFF MET LABINI WHEN HE STOPPED IN ROME ON HIS WAY TO MALTA FROM TURKEY LAST WEEK. ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY MALTA NEWS (GWU) REPORTS TALKS CENTERING ON MEANS FOR CONTROLLING INFLATION. "MEASURES TAKEN BY THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT TO CURB THE COST OF LIVING WERE DISCUSSED AND COMPARED WITH RELATIVE MEASURES TAKEN BY THE MALTA GOVERNMENT."

2. COMMENT: THE GOM'S STRATEGY FOR CONTROLLING INFLATION HAS INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING FACTORS: (A) MAINTENANCE OF UP TO 15 PERCENT DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN THE MALTA POUND AND STERLING (MOST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF MALTA'S IMPORTS COME FROM THE U.K.); (B) PRICE CONTROLS ON

CERTAIN ESSENTIAL FOODSTUFFS, INCLUDING SUBSIDIES TO LOCAL
PRODUCERS; (C) STATE INTERVENTION IN ORDER TO MAKE POSSIBLE BULK
BUYING OF IMPORTS, SOMETIMES AT POLITICALLY NEGOTIATED PRICES
ARRANGED BY OTHER FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS; AND (D) THE RECENT
INSTITUTION OF A SYSTEM OF CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMITTEES.
MINTOFF WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SEEK FROM LABINI SOME FORM GOI ASSISTANCE
IN KEEPING COST IMPORTED FOODSTUFFS DOWN, AS HE AND ZUEREB HAVE
ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS SOUGHT FROM USG, CANADA, FRANCE, AND BLOC
COUNTRIES (SEE REF B). CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMITTEES ARE PART
OF GOM'S STRATEGY COPE WITH INEVITABLE SHORTAGE AND UNAUTHORIZED
PRICE INCREASES DUE TO RETAILERS' REACTION TO PRICE CONTROLS.
ANONYMOUS COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN MALTA AND GOZO TO
MONITOR PRICES AND TRADE PRACTICES OF RETAILERS AND MIDDLEMEN.

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